

Simpson Road Redevelopment Plan Update Recommendations

Land Use and Zoning Recommendations

1.0 Land Use Policy Recommendation

Maintain the existing land use of all properties fronting Simpson Rd. between H.E. Holmes Dr. and Ezra Church Dr.

The suburban character along this portion of Simpson Rd. should not be disturbed or altered. Current development trend, favor the existing character and does not demonstrate any potential to jeopardize the current physical form of the neighborhood.

2.0 Land Use Policy Recommendation

Maintain existing land use of all properties to Joseph Lowery Blvd.

The historic character of this portion of the neighborhood favors maintaining the existing land use and zoning designations. Preserving the bungalow style housing in this area can ensure the stabilization of this portion of the corridor.

3.0 Policy Recommendation

Cluster development at three defined redevelopment nodes with residential, commercial and office land uses.

- 1. West Lake/Simpson is projected to absorb between 25,000 and 35,000 square feet of neighborhood retail and approximately 10,000 square feet of professional office floor space.*
- 2. Chappell/Beltline is projected to absorb between 160,000 and 180,000 square feet of retail/restaurant/entertainment floor space. This node will absorb at least 35,000 to 55,000 square feet of office floor space.*
- 3. Lowery/Simpson is projected to absorb between 70,000 and 90,000 square feet of neighborhood retail/restaurants/entertainment floor space. There is projected at least 35,000 to 55,000 of office space capacity in this redevelopment node.*

4.0 Policy Recommendation

Acquire land for a M.A.R.T.A. rail transit station to provide additional and convenient M.A.R.T.A. rail access at Simpson Rd. This station will additionally serve as the Beltline transfer station between M.A.R.T.A. rail passengers and the Beltline light rail service.

Zoning

1.0 Zoning Policy Recommendation (Priority 1) (Implementation 0-6 months)

Rezoning of properties fronting the Simpson corridor and in the area of influence between H.E. Holmes Dr. and M.A.R.T.A. rail as shown in Exhibit ____.

These zoning districts recognize the importance of developing a mixture of development uses that does not encroach, but protects the neighborhood fabric of the community. Providing for the multiple co-existence of development allows for greater access to convenient shopping and at the same time can facilitate a wider choice of housing types. This zoning district will offer greater opportunity to facilitate the primary goals of the proposed Beltline Tax Allocation District.

The Quality of Life districts are specifically designed to encourage:

- *Pedestrian oriented development*
- *Mixed use and multi-family developments*
- *Facilitate redevelopment of underutilized commercial corridors.*
- *Concentration of development at or near intersections (activity nodes)*

The following Quality of Life Zoning districts are needed to achieve the recommended land use goals:

1. *MRC-1 (Mixed Residential Commercial District)*
2. *MR-3-C (Multi-family Residential District)*
3. *MR4-B (Multi-family Residential District)*
4. *MR-4B-C (Multi-family Residential District)*
5. *MR-4-C (Multi-family Residential District)*

Economic Development

1.0 POLICIES GENERAL

Work with the community development corporations (CDCs) or similar nonprofit sponsor organization with organizing, marketing and real estate development experience.

Build and support coalitions of diverse partners to develop a community vision for the district's revitalization.

The participation of volunteers is key including merchants, property owners, residents, public officials, banks, churches and others. A strong and active advisory committee to lead the charge is critical to success.

Address quality of life concerns with a high emphasis on safety.

Neighborhood transformation not only involves the physical repair, but must include the social repair. Acceptance of criminal behavior and social misconduct does little to enhance the image of the Simpson corridor. Decisions and priorities must be defined by policy makers and the community, that the community's future is far too important than turning a blind eye to this issue. Vagrancy, loitering and drug dealing should rise to the top as crimes not tolerated in the future.

Invest in a mix of large redevelopment and smaller-scale business development.

In a few districts attracting 'big ticket' projects together with business and property owner assistance led to significant business expansion. Within three years of the start of LISC's commercial revitalization program, private investment outpaced public investment by a margin of nearly two-to-one.

Enhance local capacity for commercial corridor revitalization through training, technical assistance and capital resources.

Fund and hire a 12 month (or longer) professional outreach program coordinator to assist Simpson corridor businesses in the assessment of their interest and readiness to utilize the available business development programs.

2.0 POLICIES REAL ESTATE

Conduct a review of existing sites, buildings and underutilized/vacant lots for redevelopment and prepare a property inventory that includes property specifications and condition, ownership, the terms of the sale/lease.

The Atlanta Land Bank Authority powers are necessary to assemble properties in order to have a higher level of development control and partnership with existing businesses

and potential developers. The success of the demonstration block is limited when the potential project is hampered by the inability to create a contiguous opportunity for development.

Rank sites/buildings according to their potential for development or locational importance, categorizing them as short-term or long-term potential initiatives.

Concentrate on Redevelopment Nodes, building on existing anchors and recreating ‘fabric’ where none exists. Expand lot depth and breadth at these sites to create parcels large enough to make a meaningful impact.

The Simpson/West node is identified as a location to concentrate intense mixed-use development and to serve the community as a destination place for goods and services. This is the recommended location to create a demonstration block for development. Successful in most several communities is the prioritization of block areas with the most potential for development success. The Atlanta Development Authority in its “Comparative Analysis of Redevelopment Incentive Tools” identified three intersections to determine development potential and suitability (West Lake, Anderson, H.E. Holmes). Their conclusion did not provide a high favorability for a short-term (five years) development potential. This conclusion is not indicative of potential for a concentrated effort by both the public and private sector to transform a one block area into a successful mixed use project.

The city should concentrate its efforts to work with property owners and merchants to transform this one block area into the stated goals of this plan. Identification of one anchor type merchant and a housing development to bring economic synergy is necessary toward the success of this approach. All city incentives should be marketed (loan programs, Urban Enterprise Zones, Tax Credits, etc.)

Offer relocation assistance to inappropriate businesses/uses within the Redevelopment Nodes and, perhaps, businesses between the Nodes that are incompatible with redevelopment activity and/or aesthetically undesirable

3.0 POLICIES TARGETING

Create a brand identity for the Study Area that separates the Simpson Road Corridor from its competitors. The brand identity should be the foundation upon which all to redevelopment initiatives are based – e.g., logo, urban design, signage, advertising, marketing collateral, website, business recruitment, etc.

Create a Corridor wide business development team and target businesses based on the findings of the market study and rank them as near term and long term prospects.

Develop a cluster plan that unifies the Redevelopment Nodes with complementary businesses and uses that benefit from each other's sales, customers and markets. Work with realtors to steer developers and prospective businesses to appropriate locations.

Look into possible tax incentives to help "home-grown" businesses locate and stay in the area. Consider forming an Entrepreneurship Association that includes training, mentoring, technical assistance, business incubator, and support for home-based businesses.

Increase access, education and exposure to capital finance sponsored by the City of Atlanta through its Business Improvement Loan Fund (BILF), Phoenix Fund and the Small Business Administration loan program (504).

The number one problem for most small businesses existing along the Simpson corridor is gaining access to capital financing to improve the physical condition of their business. Failure toward this capability furthers limits the prospects of improving the visual image of the corridor. Education is essential toward narrowing the gap between existing merchants and business owners and available capital assistance.

All outstanding capital projects cited in the plans for English Avenue and Vine City are needed placement on a priority scheduling and final costs estimated for the issuance of Westside Tax Allocation Districts bond funds.

To insure the success of the Beltline Tax Allocation District, it is necessary to complete all current costs and feasibility studies to provide accurate data for the issuance of Beltline TAD bonds for the M.A.R.T.A. and associated private development and participation.

Investigate existing and/or develop specific incentives to entice investors: e.g., assembling and contributing land; long term no-cost lease in exchange for training and hiring local residents; density bonuses; expedited plan review; and other strategies used by urban redevelopment agencies.

Utilize where feasible and needed the recently passed Senate Bill 334 for the designation of the six Economic Development Priority (EDP) areas (including the Simpson corridor) as Urban Enterprise Zones (UEZ).

The UEZ offers scheduled tax abatement for developers and builders investing in the districts (See Economic Development tools) and should be promoted by the community and the city as a major tools for redevelopment.

Create a New Market Tax Credit program for the Simpson corridor is necessary to offer local businesses more financing options.

New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program provides an allocation of tax credits to community development entities (CDEs) which enable them to attract investment from the private-sector and reinvest these amounts in low-income communities.

The identification of a Community Development Corporation that can meet the requirements necessary to qualify as a CDE for the purpose of accepting tax credits for reinvestment in the Simpson corridor.

POLICIES 4.0 IMAGE

Institute a community wide “clean-up” program, with emphasis on high traffic areas. The Study Area must recreate itself as a vibrant, clean and safe business district in the eyes of prospective businesses and target markets.

Conduct an aggressive public relations campaign to educate area residents, workers, students and visitors of opportunities and activities in and near Simpson Road

Develop collaborative marketing initiatives with other Westside business districts.

Host an Economic Development Summit/Visioning Session; showcase existing neighborhood businesses, conduct an *Asset Building Community Development* workshop to identify entrepreneurial assets and resources and to provide encouragement to the local community for positive change.

Develop collateral marketing materials (i.e., CD-ROMs, market opportunity fact sheets, prospect packages, etc.) specifying potential redevelopment opportunities in the Study Area.

Invest in developing a website specific to the Study Area that communicates its identity to existing and prospective businesses, residents and customers. Use the website to post development progress, business listings, residential and commercial real estate information, special events, development incentives, etc.

Work to overcome widespread fear about the Simpson Road Corridor. A weekend farmers market is an example of a “community invitation” to check out the district. Leverage that into other special events that will widen the interest and the audience.

POLICIES 5.0 RECRUITMENT

Prepare a business recruitment package based on the findings of the market analysis. Develop a database to track prospects.

Create and maintain referral networks with area brokers, economic development agencies, developers, etc. and educate them regarding the types of businesses, housing and activities most appropriate for the Study Area.

Enable developers and prospective businesses to access downloadable recruitment material and applications.

Set-aside resources on an annual basis to maintain ongoing recruitment, retention/business expansion and marketing initiatives.

Urban Design Recommendations

1.0 Policy Recommendation

Adopt a design district for all properties fronting Simpson corridor from Ezra Church Dr. to M.A.R.T.A. rail by focusing on the historic styles for new development.

Using the major elements of the zoning districts within Quality of Life general zoning codes, additional design features should be included to ensure the character of the neighborhood. The requirement for the special district would be based on the existence of some underlying feature of unique interest of the Simpson corridor community. Future development within the proposed Beltline TAD should reflect this same standard.

2.0 Policy Recommendation

Adopt and require standards that encourages the use of building materials that respect and improve the integrity of the neighborhoods and corridor.

New development can enhance and preserve the Simpson corridor's distinctive history and qualities if it is designed with consideration for the past design character and effect on surrounding neighborhoods. Prohibit clapboard, vinyl or hardiplank siding facing the street.

3.0 Policy Recommendation

Require adequate or additional buffer for residential neighborhoods against the effects of development generating automobile traffic.

Development of the Beltline TAD and other areas of the Simpson corridor must guard against heavy traffic volumes going through residential areas, adequate care must be taken to ensure against disrupting existing environments as much as possible. This is especially needed for the proposed M.A.R.T.A. rail station. Incorporation of landscaping techniques, screening walls, changes in topography and building setbacks all provide substantial buffering against undesirable effects.

4.0 Policy Recommendation

Require building heights of mixed-use and multi-family developments that do not overwhelm the street or adjacent neighborhoods.

The variables of land and construction costs factor into the amount of density and gross leaseable area (GLA) are required to make a project financially work. In the case for the Simpson corridor, available land for horizontal development is limited, so the alternative is to obtain that building space vertically. Such options can place the entire corridor out

of visual scale and character with adjacent neighborhoods and must be contained to the following standards:

- 1. West of West Lake Avenue: Maximum of 35 feet (3 floors)*
- 2. West Lake Redevelopment Node: 35 feet to 52 feet (3 to 4 floors)*
- 3. Chappell/Beltline Redevelopment Node: 52 feet to 85 feet (4 to 7 floors)*

5.0 Policy Recommendation

Require that roof lines appear linear from the street without compromising architecturally interesting and unique parapets.

6.0 Policy Recommendation

Fund and build pocket parks and plazas at the following key locations:

- 1. Southwest corner of West Lake Avenue (Passive Park area)*
- 2. Beltline Transit Station (Plaza)*

7.0 Policy Recommendation

Adopt and implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles that reduces crime through development design concepts.

The four principals of the CPTED are Natural surveillance, natural access control, territorial reinforcement and maintenance and management. CPTED is an urban planning design process, which integrates crime prevention with neighborhood design and community development. There is a direct relationship between design and management of the environment to human behavior. Creating behavioral effects that will reduce the incidence and fear of crime will contribute to the improved quality of life. CPTED creates an environment whose physical characteristics, building layout and site plan function will allow inhabitants to become key agents in ensuring their own security. To deter crime, spaces should convey to would-be intruders a strong sense that, if they enter, they are very likely to be observed, to be identified as intruders, and to have difficulty escaping.

Housing Recommendations

1.0 Policy Recommendation

Fund an aggressive campaign to market the availability of existing housing rehabilitation incentive programs to developers and investors.

The City officials, staff and NPU leadership along the Simpson corridor should attend housing trade shows, real estate conferences and conventions marketing the “demonstration block”, Beltline TAD and the remainder of the corridor to potential developers and builders. Requesting audience with banks and other lending institutions to market the Simpson corridor and the Beltline TAD is crucial toward gaining acceptance by the financial community.

2.0 Policy Recommendation

Fund the production of a DVD highlighting the elements of the redevelopment plan along with local, state and federal incentives for rehabilitation existing housing and the construction of new housing.

This DVD should be a marketing tool highlighting the benefits of developing along the Simpson corridor and the Beltline TAD area. Focus on the three major redevelopment nodes is a necessary highlight to feature in DVD. The Mayor, City Councilman, key residents and the business community should have a speaking role in this DVD.

3.0 Policy Recommendation

Produce and distribute a semi-yearly or annual announcement of the rehabilitation and new housing ownership programs for low and fixed income families.

The knowledge gap concerning housing rehabilitation programs is significant among the elderly and the working poor. Educating the community is imperative so that those choosing to rehabilitate their houses have options other than the private sector or profiteers that have recently been taking advantage of the elder and poor.

4.0 Policy Recommendation

Fund and sponsor a round table forum with the homebuilder and construction industries to create acceptable design standards while keeping housing costs affordable to Simpson corridor residents.

The city should sponsor (or seek funding) research on construction design techniques and building materials that can reduce housing costs. The Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances and Building Codes should be readily modified in response to innovations.

5.0 Policy Recommendation

Increase all Homestead Exemptions for the Elderly by 15% and increase the annual net household income eligibility to \$45,000 for all exemptions

The largest fear by many especially the elderly and working poor, is losing their home to increase valuation because of the redevelopment efforts of this project. The most vulnerable people should not live in fear of losing one of their most important assets, simply because they are living in their golden years. Hence, anticipating the success of this program should also anticipate reduction of a tax liability for seniors.

6.0 Policy Recommendation

Adopt the standards set forth in Fulton County's newly adopted Inclusionary Zoning legislation that encourages through density incentives work force housing by the private sector.

On April 5, 2006, Fulton County adopted the state's first Inclusionary Zoning legislation that voluntary to the developer using density bonuses to attract workforce housing. The city should embrace this or a similar policy.

7.0 Policy Recommendation

Identify a developer and utilize existing local, state and federal funding and incentives to construct a senior assisted living community near or within the Simpson corridor.

Environmental Recommendations

1.0 Policy Recommendation

Continue to enforce the city's current zoning and development codes prohibiting development within floodplains and wetland areas.

2.0 Policy Recommendation

Acquisition of sensitive lands for park development along the corridor is necessary to compliment new development with park amenities.